

## patients & families united

March 10 2009

TO: Montana House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Tom Daubert, Director, PATIENTS & FAMILIES UNITED

RE: HB 541

PATIENTS & FAMILIES UNITED focuses on medical issues, including pain treatment (whether it involves medical marijuana or not), as well as the rights and needs of patients who need legal medical marijuana to treat a variety of severe conditions.

Thus, HB 541 falls outside our usual scope of interests, but we have decided to register our strong support for the bill for two fundamental reasons:

First, our group's many members, and their friends and relatives, all **pay taxes** – and we are as concerned as anyone about the effectiveness of spending at the state and local level on the law enforcement work we depend on for public safety.

Second, Montana's medical marijuana patients – roughly 1,900 people in 42 different counties – are perhaps more keenly aware than most others of **the truth about marijuana**, and about how many of our society's predominant notions about marijuana are totally false.

HB 541 makes good sense for a number of reasons.

Positive outcomes have resulted in other states that have decriminalized small-quantity marijuana possession. Research shows that decriminalization didn't increase use of marijuana but often led to decreases. In fact, it is in states with the most rigid enforcement of prohibition that marijuana use has increased the most. This proves that our current approach has failed.

Further, our current approach actually "steals" time and money away from law enforcement effectiveness in response to violent crimes and property crimes, the kinds of things that make people feel unsafe and that disrupt neighborhood values. Again, decriminalization of marijuana possession in other states has helped lower violent crime rates. Thus, HB 541 would reduce wasted time now spent on activities that don't work, and would increase time spent on law enforcement activities that do work.

Without increasing funding for law enforcement, HB 541 could produce better results – and would do so without causing any increase in illegal marijuana use.

Finally, we urge you to keep in mind that most all the claims about marijuana made by those who might oppose HB 541 are unfounded. The vast majority of scientific research about marijuana, published in prestigious, peer-reviewed journals, has documented the truth: marijuana is NOT addicting; marijuana is NOT a “gateway” drug that leads to other, “harder” drugs; and it is not possible to overdose on marijuana. Indeed, in 5,000 years of continuous human use of marijuana as a medicine and a religious sacrament, there has been not a single recorded incident of death caused directly by marijuana.

We would be glad to provide the House Judiciary Committee, if it wishes, detailed documentation, including copies of lengthy research reports, that support our view.

The plain fact is that every single serious study, including that by the National Academy of Sciences; investigations conducted by several administrative law judges in the Drug Enforcement Administration; and all the national and international commissions formed over the past 100+ years – including the Shafer Commission whose members were hand-picked by President Nixon – have drawn conclusions that would support HB 541.